

Povis

UNIT: 319th Inf 80th Inf Div

PERIOD: 8-18 April 1945

ACTION: Drive from GOTHA to CHEMNITZ in coordination with CCA
4th Armd Div

SOURCE: Col Geo SMYTHE, Asst Div Cmdr 80th Inf Div, Col N. A.
COSTELLO, CO 319th Inf, 80th Inf Div, Major Ralph J.
WEVERS, S-3, 319th Inf

PLACE & DATE OF INTERVIEW: 319th Inf CP, BAMBERG, Germany

INTERVIEWERS: 1/Lt Harry A. Morris and T/4 Weldon T. Patton

NOTE: Records were checked after the interview in conjunction
with the Regtl S-3

MAPS: G.S., G.S. No 4416, Germany; Scale 1:100,000, KASSEL, HERS-
FELD, ERFURT and JENA Sheets.

5

KASSEL fell 04 April to the combined assault of all the regi-
mental ^{cto} of the 80th Inf Div. The 319th Inf had fought its way into
the city from the east. The 3d Bn had been left behind perched
on the high ground commanding the eastern approaches and overlooking
BETTENHAUSEN (C2402). With their back thus secured the 1st and 2d
Bns battled into the city and joined forces with the 2d Bn 318th
Inf in the center of the city at the bridge captured intact over
the FULDA River. On XX Corps order (042300 Apr) the 80th Inf Div
struck east with the 319th Inf. General MC BRIDE, CG 80th Inf Div,
ordered (050030) ^{April} Col COSTELLO, CO 319th Inf, to attack SE at
050700 ^{mid} and clear the enemy forming in the woods vic OBERKAUFUNGEN
(H3299). The 80th Cav Ren Trp started out (050630) ^{April} after 8 TOT
by Div Arty on the woods and gained contact (050730) ^{April} with the 1st
Bn 385th Inf, 76th Inf Div, on the right. With K Co leading the 3d
Bn 319th Inf in wedge formation attacked on the right or south

flank at 050700. K Co struck south to capture NIEDERKAUFUNGEN (C3000) while the remainder of the 3d Bn swung N to clear the woods and enveloped OBERKAUFUNGEN (H3299) from the south by noon. After an enemy concentration of tanks and Inf were dispersed in this vic by Div Arty the town was cleared by 051500. The 1st Bn on the left was committed at 051030 hours and overcame S/A resistance in GUTWINDHAUSEN (C3002). Late in the afternoon of 05 Apr the regmtl attack was stopped on Corps order due to a revision in army boundaries by 12th Army Group and the 1st US Army took over KASSEL while the 80th Inf Div was hurried south to come within the new XX Corps boundary which ran along an axis of GOTH-ERFURT-WEIMAR-JENA-CHEMNITZ and had for its final objective, DRESDEN. The leading armored elements of XX Corps were well to the east of KASSEL. The 6th Armd Div had taken MUHLHAUSEN (J9193) and was shelling LANCANSALZA (J0382). The 4th Armd Div was sitting securely in and around GOTH (J0965). The 80th Inf Div planned to move to the WERRA River line and eliminate pockets of enemy by-passed by the 4th Armd Div in their dash east. After reaching GOTH the 80th Inf Div would pass through the armor and break the shallow line east of GOTH that the enemy had thrown together in the 4 day cessation of the armored drive pending the readjustment of boundaries and shuffling of units. ERFURT would be the initial goal of the 318th Inf. The 319th Inf was given the mission of following closely behind CCA of the 4th Armd Div and mopping up all resistance by-passed by CCA. The 319th Inf was not to be attached to the armor but was to remain under divisional control. The Regt was to coordinate however, independently of the division with the armor and arrange its

own liaison. ("An unique arrangement which worked out splendidly because the 80th Inf Div maintained a watchful and paternal attitude throughout affording assistance that the armor would not have been able to give, e. g. relief in towns that had been cleared thus enabling the 319th CT to keep on the heels of the armor. Furthermore the armor would have been pre-occupied by its own problems and an outfit not organically a part of it would have received secondary consideration. Coordination was excellent; command channels were eliminated and the 319th CT was allowed to operate independently of Div and Corps but directly with the combat command it was following. In addition to this the 319th CT by being neither a supporting unit nor an attachment but having a concurrent mission which supplemented and aided the drive of the armor was afforded every assistance the armor was capable of giving to the same degree as if it had been attached or was in support of the armor. This was proven in the Arty coordination." Col N. A. COSTELLO.)

The assembly area initially established for the 319th CT (319th Inf plus 905 FA Bn, Co C 305 Engr Bn; 1 Med Tk Co 702d Tk Bn (Co C)) had to be staged forward while the 319th CT was enroute to its assembly area as reserve for Div due to the unforeseen rapidity of the advance of the 317th and 318th CTs beyond GOTHA. So, while the 319th CT was enroute Div sent a Liaison Officer with the order for it to close in on GOTHA and take over the guarding of installations. The 319th CT closed in GOTHA at 080400 hrs Apr 1945 and took over from the 4th Armd Div and one Bn of the 355th Inf. The city was split up into three sectors with the 1st Bn in the northern part, the 2d Bn occupying the western third while the 3d Bn held the southern

portion. Here the Regt remained until the morning of the 10th of April when the 317th Inf on the north and the 318th Inf on the south pushed towards ERFURT. The 319th in reserve moved its Bns around GAMSTADT (J2166) on the divisional right flank behind the 318th Inf. The 317th and 318th Inf became involved in a hardily contested battle around ERFURT so while enroute to GAMSTADT the Regt was ordered by Div to continue east and assemble at MALSDORF (J2660) preparatory to an encircling move of the city. While assembling at MALSDORF word was received from Div that the armor was striking east on the southern flank of ERFURT and the 319th Inf was to follow behind it. The 318th Inf would enter and reduce ERFURT while the 2d and 3d Bns of the 317th CT would swing north of ERFURT and continue the drive east. The 319th CT had as its next objective the town of WEIMAR and maintained contact with the 1st Bn 317th on the north (see overlay #1). The regtl plan of attack for the morning of 11 April was to advance with 2 Bns abreast, the 3d on the N and the 1st on the S with the 2d Bn initially in reserve. The two assault Bns started from their assembly areas (see sketch) on foot to the LD which was the N/S road bisecting the Autobahn between EGSTEDT (J3363) and BECHSTEDTWEGE (J3461). The assault Bns moved out at 110700 Apr and reached the LD at 0900 and started to deploy in a line of skirmishers from the approach march formation of a column of companies. As the 3d Bn extended itself in front of EGSTEDT elements of the 4th Armd Div came charging through the town. The 4th Armd Div was operating in two columns composed of the 51st Inf Bn and the 8th Tk Bn staying off the Autobahn and driving east on both sides of it using it for a guiding point while a reserve

composed of elements of the 53d Inf Bn and 35th Tk Bn followed behind on the Autobahn a distance of 2-3 miles prepared to strike either north or south in aid of either of the two advance columns in contact. The 1st Bn had deployed in extended formation with two companies facing BECHSTEDTWEGE and at 110900 Apr attacked to advance without opposition through the town and flushed out the woods east of the town in the face of small arms fire only. After the woods had been cleared the organic transportation of the Bn was brought forward and the assault elements of the Bn thus motorized drove to POSSENDORF (J5166) along the Autobahn after subduing a flurry of small arms fire at SCHELLRODA (J3762). The 3d Bn stayed in position at EGSTEDT until the armor had completely passed and at 1235 hours swept the woods to front and converged on RHODA (J3865) which fell (111400 Apr) after a short fire fight by forward elements. The attack swept forward encountering occasional small arms resistance which was quickly eliminated; through OBERNISSA (J3966)-MONCHENHOLZHAUSEN (J3968)-SOLMSTEDT (J4168)-BECHSTEDTSTRASS (J4267) and UTZBERG (J4269) where it stopped for the night. As soon as the 1st Bn cleared SCHELLRODA Col COSTELLO ordered the reserve Bn, the 2d, forward to BECHSTEDTWAGE and as the 1st continued its motorized advance to POSSENDORF the 2d Bn shuttled its elements forward by truck to TROISTEDT (J4665). That evening Col COSTELLO called in his Bn COs and discussed his plans for the attack on WEIMAR the morning of 12 April. The 1st Bn was well out in front while the 2d and 3d Bns were practically abreast of one another and astride the Autobahn. Col COSTELLO decided to wheel the two rear Bns NE on WEIMAR while the leading 1st Bn would follow on the heels of the 4th Armd Div

CCA to mop up pockets by-passed. ("An outstanding characteristic of Col SEAR's handling of CCA was his ability to leave things alone. By that I mean he would not try to reduce enemy pockets of resistance which would force him to deploy and dismount his Armd Inf and thus lose valuable time. He would by-pass the resistance or go charging past it and leave my Inf mass to take care of it.") Col N. A. COSTELLO. Before the attack took place Col COSTELLO decided to send the Burgomeister of TROISTEDT into WEIMAR by bicycle with a surrender ultimatum. The Burgomeister was summoned before the Col and the surrender ultimatum given to him with the instructions to leave for WEIMAR at 0600 hrs 12 Apr and be back by 0830 hrs with the answer because the attack would commence at that time. An Arty officer from CCA stayed with the 319th Inf and he had the authority from Col Gordon SEARS, CO CCA, 4th Armd Div, to reinforce the fire of the 905th FA Bn when their fire was inadequate. The rapid rush to WEIMAR plus utilization of Arty vehicles for Inf transportation had left the guns of the 905th FA behind; the Arty of CCA therefore fired harassing fire on WEIMAR throughout the night. The Burgomeister was delayed for a half an hour as he was stopped and searched by elements of CCA who notified Col COSTELLO. The attack was therefore delayed another hour for the return of the Burgomeister. At 0915 the Burgomeister made his appearance with a formal surrender from the Burgomeister of WEIMAR. The trucks of the Regt having been used to transport the 2d Bn on the previous day were still with the 2d Bn so the 2d Bn was ordered to mount and enter WEIMAR where it would maintain law and order while the 1st and 3d Bns attacked east on JENA. Div was notified

of this arrangement and a request was made for relief to be sent to WEIMAR in order for the 319th to remain at full strength and afford the required support to the armor. The 2d Bn was relieved by the 2d Bn 317th Inf at 1700 hrs and moved to GRETSCHWABHAUSEN (J6366) north of and abreast of the 1st Bn which had advanced without opposition by motor to GOTTERN (J6261) where it had dismounted and made preparations for the attack on JENA (J7082). The 3d Bn on the S had advanced without opposition to NIEDERSYNDERSTEDT (J6060) where it prepared to cross the SAALE River with CCR of the 4th Armd Div over a bridge to be erected by CCA during the day at MAUA (J7159). The 1st Bn in the meantime, while it waited for the 2d Bn to come abreast on its left flank, sent the I and R plat to check the woods screening it from JENA. The I & R plat fired a volley of MG fire into the woods and 40 PWs came out. A squad of Inf then went with the I & R plat and checked DOBREISCHEN (J6364) which was unoccupied. The squad of Inf was left to hold it as this was to be the LD for the planned night attack of the 1st Bn on JENA. Col COSTELLO briefed the 1st and 2d Bn COs on the plan which was for the 1st Bn to strike straight into JENA from the east while the 2d Bn from GROSSCHWABHAUSEN (J6366) swept the woods SW of JENA to the SALLE River. The 1st Bn with B Co leading and A and C Cos echeloned to the right rear attacked at midnight but the attacking elements ran into a defended road block at (J677667) after it had left DOBREISCHEN and Capt R. SCOTT CO of Co B was killed so the attack was called off for the evening. A surrender ultimatum had been sent to JENA the afternoon before by the Col of police in a German car from WEIMAR but the answer had been in the negative. The attack

was postponed until dawn of the 12th of April. The 1st attacked at first light and after fighting small arms-panzerfaust, bazooka and sniper fire got into the town at 120930 April. The 2d had swept to the S through the woods and was checking the small towns that lie around JENA and was entering the city from the S to make contact with the 1st Bn before crossing the SAALE River. The Bns had been leap-frogging all the while prior to the attack. One Bn was always on the move and usually two Bns were moving. This was done by shuttling. All vehicles were used. The Arty trucks were pressed into service and approximately 30 captured enemy vehicles were utilized. The 1st Bn fought through JENA during the day in house to house combat. The 80th Inf Div left one Bn of the 317th Inf to maintain law and order in ERFURT which fell 121900 Apr and moved up two Bns of the 317th Inf to aid in the reduction of JENA (J7082). The 1st and 3d Bns, 317th Inf, struck it from the N while the 2d Bn, 319th Inf, relieved in WEIMAR, skirted the town from the N and blocked the eastern approaches to JENA which was reduced at 121500 Apr.

The 3d Bn 319th Inf in reserve at NIEDERSYNDERSTEDT was alerted to move forward after Div had called (121630 Apr) and ordered elements 319th Inf to take over a bridge from the armor over the Autobahn in the vic of GOSCHWITZ (J7160). Col COSTELLO went forward and made arrangements with the C/S 4th Armd Div to move his motorized Inf units forward (3d Bn) on the S part of the Autobahn while CCR which was following CCA on the southern portion of the 4th Armd Div right flank used the northern double lane. The 3d Bn moved forward on the southern portion leaving one squad at GOSCHWITZ and one Co

of Inf at the Autobahn CR (J8961). The remainder of the Bn moved into the vic of (K0265) north of GERA and relieved elements of the 4th Armd Div along the Autobahn, and over the Autobahn bridge (K032-654) over the WEISE ELSTER River N of GERA. The Regt then planned to seize GERA while the 4th Armd Div continued its drive to the E. The 1st Bn had in the meantime cleared JENA and was sent in trucks along the Autobahn to TOPPELN (K0063) where it arrived at 122300 Apr and was instructed that its mission would be to clear out the woods lying to the W of GERA. It would enter the town from the W while the 3d Bn charged in from the N. As soon as the 3d Bn had detrucked NW of GERA the trucks were sent back to bring up the 2d Bn which had walked across the SALLE River to an assembly area at (K008617) at 2400 hours.

A German outpost commanded by two German officers refused envoys from the 3d Bn entrance through their lines to offer an unconditional surrender ultimatum to the garrison commander of GERA. Col COSTELLO then planned the attack as follows. After a 45 minute Arty preparation from the Arty with CCA 4th Armd Div, as own arty was too far back due to the quick movement and use of their trucks to move the Inf and use of the rocket shooting plat of tks (6 tks with 60 rockets each) from the 702d Tk Bn attached to the Regt. The 1st Bn on its way up to its forward assembly area would relieve the one Co of the 3d Bn at the Autobahn CR and the guards at the Autobahn bridge. The 3d Bn after leaving K Co to contain the city from the N would slip to the E of GERA. I and L Cos would then attack GERA from the E and NE to the WEISSE ELSTER River which ran through the town. At the same time the 2d would attack from the W and clear out the woods W

of GERA. It would enter GERA on Regtl order only while the 1st Bn (-) would remain in Regtl reserve SW of GERA.

On the morning of the 14th of April after the 45 minute Arty and rocket barrage the 3d Bn attacked from the E and NE. After a brief exchange of S/A fire I and L Cos entered the town where the fight settled down into the familiar routine of digging out isolated sniper teams and MG nests from various buildings. The 2d Bn on the W side had however run into considerably more difficulty. The enemy had apparently anticipated the attack would be from that direction (interrogation of PWs substantiated this) and not from the E where the main effort was made. The enemy had set up two SP guns of 88mm caliber with dug-in Inf around them to meet the attack. This resistance collapsed when the 3d Bn (-) entered the town from the rear.

The Div was notified that the town was clear at 141810 April and that the 3d would stay in it until relieved. But, as the mission of the 319th Inf remained one of closely following behind the CCA it was taking off to follow them. The 1st and 2d Bns were motorized. Div informed Col COSTELLO that the 1st Bn 317th Inf was moving forward from JENA to relieve the 3d in GERA and elements of the 1st Bn at the CR and bridge. The 1st Bn was moved by motor to GRIMMITSCHAU (K2858) into the northern half of the town which had been cleared by the dash of the armor. The southern half still contained enemy and although it was in VIII Corps zone (the boundary line ran straight through the center of the town) the 1st Bn, which had started 1400 hours and closed 1930 hours, was given the mission of clearing it in the morning. The 2d Bn in the meantime moved at

1430 hours and detrucked behind the forward elements of the armor which were attacking GLACHAU (K3858). The 2d Bn went into an assembly area NW of the town in the group of buildings located at (K3659) and plans were worked out with the CO of the 51st Armd Inf Bn for the 2d Bn to take over at dawn and clear the town 15 April.

The 3d Bn remained in GERA for the evening as the promised relief did not appear until 141800 hours. Col COSTELLO decided that it was too late to move them up that night and ordered the 3d to move forward in the morning 15 April.

Col COSTELLO planned to move the 3d forward at dawn and clear MEERANE (K3360) while the 1st cleaned out CRIMMITSHAU and the 2d Bn passed through the 51st Armd Inf Bn and wiped up the resistance in GLACHAU. MEERANE capitulated at 0800 hours 15 April as the 3d enveloped it from the S and W. The 1st Bn had little difficulty routing out snipers from the southern half of CRIMMITSCHAU as the bulk of the defenders had fled during the night.

In GLACHAU liaison had been maintained with the 51st Armd Inf Bn throughout the night. The town was about 75% cleared out but the narrow streets prohibited the use of tanks and TDs. The enemy Inf was anchored in the buildings and was stoutly resisting any further penetration with bazooka and MG fire. Resistance seemed to be centered around a barracks in the eastern edge of the town. The 51st had taken out approximately 2000 PWs the day before but when the 2d moved in at 0730 hours 15 April it became involved in a bitter house to house struggle necessitating a house to house search and seizure. About 200 SS troops were finally cornered in the barracks and fanatically resisted all efforts to dig them out.

Five hundred and seventy eight (578) PWs had been taken by 2000 hours. A medical jeep carrying a wounded German soldier and two German nurses plus one American medic went by the barracks; a bazooka shot killed them all. The assault elements of the 2d Bn thereupon closed in on the barracks. When the barracks and the last resistance in GLACHAU had been taken at 2330 hours there were still only 578 PWs.

The Bns remained in position during the night while the armor of CCA and the Cav Sqdn moved around to the E of GLACHAU prepared to strike at CHEMNITZ.

At 0700 hours the next morning (16 April) orders came from Div to relieve the CCA of the Armd Div while the 318th Inf relieved CCB of the 4th Armd Div on the northern flank of the divisional zone of advance. At 0900 hours the 1st and 3d Bns were committed on the line and the 2d was placed in reserve at PLEISSA (K5461). The rapid and continuous movement was coordinated with the 4th Armd Div and was worked out with direct liaison. The Colonel and Major WEVERS (his S-3) were always constantly with CCA.

The Regt I and R plat was employed on the left (N) flank and maintained contact with the 811th TD Rcn Co attached to the 317th Inf. This worked out splendidly between GERA and GLACHAU. The 811th TD Rcn Co fanned out in front of both Regts and by the use of a check point system worked out by the Regt'l COs of the 317th and 319th Infs Rcn was provided both Regts. The 811th TD Rcn Co left a SCR #506 at the 319th Inf Hqrs and Regt was able to listen in on the various team reports.

The Regt was either fighting, resting or moving throughout the

entire eight day period. One Bn, during the day, was always moving forward while another was mopping up and the other was committed in whatever fracas the situation demanded. In the eight day scrap the 319th Inf took over 2500 PWs.

"The 319th Inf could do a job for the 4th Armd Div what their own Armd Inf Bns could not do. We were able to provide them mass. For example, if the armor had stopped to reduce resistance in JENA they would have been held up for 3 or 4 days. But one characteristic of CCA was that they avoided all spots that seemed likely to give them trouble and left it to us. Coordination was worked out by CO to CO and by maintaining constant liaison with each other. It was my effort to keep the Regtl CP up with the Combat Command CP and the Autobahn enabled us to do this. Captured German trucks, thirty in all, plus use of the attached Arty Bn vehicles and the TD vehicles enabled us to move whole Bns at a time. Furthermore the elimination of command channels greatly expedited coordination. Regt and CCA worked together independently." Col COSTELLO.